

## A Call to Repent

**“May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” Romans 6:2**

In this verse, the apostle Paul emphatically answers the question of whether a Christian should keep practicing sin with a resounding, “May it never be!” Other versions of the Bible translate this as “Certainly not!” “Absolutely not!” and “God forbid!” Paul also makes it clear that any Christian who continues to practice sin is “living in sin.” Now there was a time when the term “living in sin” meant more to the church. In the past, Christians who were “living in sin” were not allowed to participate in church life. These days, however, it is common for Christians to be living in sin and still be active church members. This is grievous and tragic. The Bible says that if you are living in sin, you are not living in Christ. “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness... no one who lives in Him keeps sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or knows Him (1 John 3:4 & 6).” There are two reasons why many Christians continue to practice sin instead of practicing sanctification. The first reason is an ignorance of what the Bible calls “the fear of God.” This “fear of God” is a direct result of seeing God as He truly is - a holy God. Once we see God as holy, we will understand the evil of sin and hate sin. This is why the Bible says “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil... the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 8:13; 9:10).” The other reason that most Christians do not know how to stop sinning is because they do not know (believe and act on) the Biblical truth of what Jesus Christ has fully accomplished for us on the cross. This is the truth that Paul introduces for the first time in this verse. Normally, when Christians ask how they can stop sinning, they are told they should *try harder* to stop sinning by reading the Bible more, praying more, going to church more, involving themselves in ministry more, etc. *But Paul has a different answer.* In effect, he says, “Don’t you *know* you that you have died to sin?” This is the great Biblical truth that sets you free from sin and this is the truth that we will look at more closely in our future devotional studies.

The first step a Christian must take, if they desire to live a sanctified life free from sin, is to sincerely repent from the sin of unbelief. God will not grant us the faith to believe in His Son’s work on the cross unless we have a repentant heart. We must repent from this unbelief concerning the power of Christ’s death on the cross. The fruit of our unbelief is disobedience and lawlessness (living in sin). The Bible says if we continue to willfully and persistently practice sin after being saved, we will be trampling the Son of God under our feet; treating the blood of His New Covenant as unholy; and insulting the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:26-29). The Bible says that unless such a person repents, he can expect terrifying judgment and severe punishment from God (Hebrews 10:29-31). Repentance should always be our first response to hearing the gospel of the kingdom of God, which is the message of Christ’s Kingship. John the Baptist preached, “*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2).” Jesus proclaimed, “*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17).” Jesus’ disciples “preached that men should *repent* (Mark 6:12).” When a crowd of unbelievers were convicted by the apostle Peter’s preaching, they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter’s response was, “*Repent* and be baptized, everyone of you for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:37-38).” The apostle Paul “declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must *repent* and turn

to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).” It is evident from the Scriptures that Jesus and His disciples preached repentance foremost in their message of the gospel.

What does the Bible mean to repent? The Greek word for “repent” is *metanoeo*, which means to change your mind and purpose. True repentance is not a feeling; it is a decision. Repentance means you decide to turn away from sin and turn to God. Jesus told the following parable which illustrates the nature of repentance. “There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later *changed his mind* and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? (Matthew 28-32).” From this parable, we see that repentance is demonstrated by a change in our mind and actions. John the Baptist said, “Produce fruit that proves your repentance (Matthew 3:8).” The apostle Paul exhorted that men “should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance (Acts 26:20).” The only way we can know God is to repent and turn away from sin. “In the past God overlooked ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to *repent* (Acts 17:30).” There is no substitute for repentance. Baptism, church membership and ministry cannot take the place of repentance. Yet, preaching on repentance is missing from most pulpits today. As a result, our churches are filled with people who have never truly repented from living in sin and, therefore, do not really know God.

Many born again Christians wish they had more faith to believe that Christ delivered them from the power of sin. However, we cannot hope to have more faith in the cross of Christ unless we truly repent from sin. If we *secretly* want to keep sinning, God will not give us the faith to believe in the delivering power of Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus said, “Unless you *repent* you will all perish (Luke 13:3).” Whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, we should always repent. Repentance does not mean we feel sorry that we were caught sinning and then continue to sin *with the expectation that God will always forgive our sin*. Without true repentance, we cannot have true faith. Jesus told the church in Laodicea, “Be zealous and *repent* (Revelation 3:19).” True repentance springs from a broken and contrite heart that earnestly yearns to turn away from sin. The Bible says this is “the *repentance* that leads to life (Acts 11:18).” May God grant us a spirit of repentance so we might receive His life!

There are two actions a Christian must take to overcome sin and live holy in Christ. We have just discussed the first action required: *Repent!* In our next devotional study, we will look at the second action required to walk in sanctification: *Believe!* For Jesus said, “*Repent and believe* in the gospel (Mark 1:15)!”

Tomorrow: Romans 6:3

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